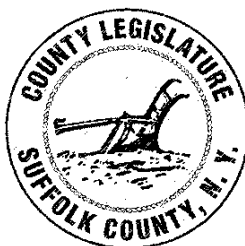


SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Steve Stern

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NO MORE SOLDIERS ON THE STREETS

Legislator Steve Stern teams with elected officials and veterans' advocates to introduce 'Housing Our Homeless Heroes Act' to end veterans homelessness in Suffolk County



Suffolk County Legislator Steve Stern joined Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, Congressman Tim Bishop, Town of Huntington Supervisor Frank Petrone and veterans advocates to announce the "Housing Our Homeless Heroes Act."

HAUPPAUGE, NY – Legislator Steve Stern (D-Huntington, 16th L.D.), Chairman of the Veterans and Seniors Committee, was joined by Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, Congressman Tim Bishop, Town of Huntington Supervisor Frank Petrone and veterans' advocates to announce the introduction of the **"Housing Our Homeless Heroes Act"** at Armed Forces Plaza in Hauppauge Aug. 4, 2014.

Suffolk County is proud to be home to the largest number of veterans in New York State. Unfortunately, Suffolk also has one of the largest populations of homeless veterans. The **"Housing Our Homeless Heroes Act,"** is a package of legislative initiatives that affirms Suffolk County's commitment to the goal of being the first county in New York State to end veterans' homelessness.

"When a soldier goes off to protect the ground we stand on, it is unacceptable that he or she should have to come home to sleep on it," Legislator Stern said. "Suffolk County has a strong tradition of caring for our

veterans and we must lead the way in serving those who have served us and our great nation. That is why I am proposing the **“Housing Our Homeless Heroes Act,”** which takes meaningful action to address the challenges veterans and their families face when they find themselves without a roof over their heads or struggling to stay afloat.”

Click the news links below to see VIDEO from the day’s event:

NBC, [“Bill Aims to Help Homeless Veterans on Long Island”](#)

News 12, [“Housing Our Homeless Heroes Act in Suffolk County aims to end veteran homelessness”](#)

“We are a County that has a long standing tradition of providing high quality services to our veterans,” said County Executive Steve Bellone. “Legislator Stern’s proposals will serve to enhance our existing services and allow our veterans quicker access to the services they need and deserve. I look forward to working with the Legislator to make this legislation as effective as possible. ”

“I have long been a leader in solving the crisis of homelessness among veterans. I’m pleased that many of our community and business leaders are stepping up and taking action to help our local veterans both on the issue of homelessness and also by committing to hire returning veterans. I look forward to working together so we can end this crisis once and for all,” Congressman Steve Israel said.

“We owe the men and women who put on our country’s uniform a debt of gratitude that is difficult to ever fully repay,” Congressman Tim Bishop said. “One of the most important things we can do is ensure that they, and their families, have a roof over their heads. I applaud Legislator Stern and County Executive Bellone for taking up this important issue at the county level, and offer my support as they move forward in adapting the federal HUD-VASH program to the local level.”

The **“Housing Our Homeless Heroes Act”** includes four bills, which will protect our veterans from housing discrimination, provide additional housing resources, enhance services and improve outreach efforts to cut the red tape and help homeless veterans, their families and those at risk of homelessness get back on their feet:

1. Housing Our Homeless Heroes Act

This Act will establish partnerships with agencies and community advocates that serve our veterans and their families and establish an informational web portal on the Suffolk County website to direct veterans to services across all levels of government and within the non-profit sector.

2. Maximizing Access to Available Housing

An initiative to utilize existing County housing assets in order to provide homes for our veterans and their families.

3. End Housing Discrimination Against Veterans and their Families

The current housing discrimination bill is limited to those currently serving. This bill would amend that language to include veterans and their families so that, whether single or married with children, male or female, receiving government aid or not, our veterans are fully protected.

4. Appointing a Veterans Service Officer to the Department of Social Services

This aspect of the legislation would require a VSO (Veterans Service Officer) to work at DSS on a regular basis. VSO officers must themselves be veterans so this will ensure that when a veteran walks into DSS, he or she is met by another veteran to establish a peer-to-peer relationship, as well as have access to a professional who is fully knowledgeable of all programs and services available to veterans.

“Today’s announcements are consistent with our long standing commitment to serving those who have served us. Our partners in government and the community, including County Executive Bellone, Legislator Stern, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the department of Housing and Urban Development and the many others are determined to do what is necessary to provide access and opportunity to all of those who have served this nation. If it is good for the vet, we want to do it,” Tom Ronayne, Suffolk County Director Veterans Service Agency, said.

"I would like to congratulate Legislator Stern, County Executive Bellone, and the entire Suffolk County Legislature for spearheading the drive to end veterans’ homelessness in our region. Suffolk County has played an instrumental role in helping us develop two projects that will house 90 homeless veterans in beautiful units that have won the support of the community. The infrastructure funding provided by the County made the 60 units we are developing in Amityville possible. These units are ready to open within the next two weeks. Thirty more units are being developed in Ronkonkoma. Added to the new initiatives in this legislation we can be one of the first communities in the country to eliminate veteran homelessness in our region,” Ralph Fasano, Executive Director for Concern for Independent Living, said.

“The Department of Housing and Urban Development applauds Suffolk County’s commitment to ending veterans’ homelessness,” said Holly Leicht, HUD Region 2 Regional Administrator, serving New York and New Jersey. “The brave men and women of the military, who have given so much to protect our lives and liberty, deserve to have a place to call home. The **'Housing Our Homeless Heroes Act'** dovetails nicely with our Mayors Challenge to end Veteran Homelessness. Together, we're proving that when all levels of government join forces, we can achieve great things.”

"This resolution by Legislator Stern is a step in the right direction to help identify and assist our homeless veterans or those at risk of becoming homeless. All of us at Suffolk County United Veterans are proud to be part of this initiative through programs such as Supportive Services for Veterans Families. Our veterans need to know that no matter when, where or how they served, they have earned the respect and gratitude of the American people for protecting the freedoms we enjoy every day. Thank you Legislator Stern for your commitment to our veterans, especially those in need," John Rago, Suffolk County United Veterans Outreach Coordinator for SSVF, said.

“On behalf of Suffolk County United Veterans, which has been dedicated since 1989 to housing our homeless veterans, we applaud Legislator Stern’s efforts to bring every resource available to our County government to end veterans’ homelessness. There was a time in our society when homeless veterans were shunned and forgotten. With these actions, our Legislature is indeed telling every veteran, ‘Welcome Home and Thank You for Your Service,’” Wilkens Young, Director, Suffolk County United Veterans, and Michael Stoltz, CEO, Association for Mental Health and Wellness, said.

“The Long Island Coalition for the Homeless, the Long Island Continuum of Care and Team Long Island and the region’s Initiative to End Veteran Homelessness, have been working on innovative solutions homelessness among veterans over the last year, and have identified various barriers to housing. We are thrilled that Suffolk County is joining the initiative, and are grateful to Legislator Steven Stern for proposing the **Housing Our Homelessness Heroes Act**, which will eliminate many of the barriers we have identified, and increase access to

affordable, stable housing for the men and women who served our country,” Greta Guarton, executive director of the Nassau-Suffolk Coalition for the Homeless, said.

“The Town of Huntington has consistently worked with veterans and veterans groups to provide services veterans need and deserve, including two upcoming affordable housing developments in which veterans will receive preference,” said Huntington Supervisor Frank P. Petrone. “I wholeheartedly support Legislator Stern’s legislative initiatives to help veterans and their families deal with the many facets of their housing challenges.”

“The Suffolk County Veteran Service Agency under the leadership of the current director Mr. Tom Ronayne has made tremendous strides in eliminating homelessness among Suffolk County veterans. With the support of Legislator Steven Stern and the package of legislative initiatives he is proposing, I believe we now will have the tools as a community to end veteran homelessness in Suffolk County,” Frank Amalfitno, President and CEO of United Veterans Beacon House, said.

“Veteran homelessness is a national and a local disgrace, that we have for so long ignored the needs of so many men and women whose dedication and sacrifice secured our freedom. I applaud Legislator Stern for sharpening the focus on our obligation as a community to begin repaying the debt we owe them,” Ken Rosenblum, Director of the Veterans' and Servicemembers' Rights Clinic at Toro College, said.

“The Long Island Board of Realtors® is proud to be a member of the Nassau/Suffolk Continuum of Care Group and honored to be working alongside the Long Island Coalition for the Homeless, The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. We, the Realtor® community, working as housing advocates in our Long Island communities for over 100 years, are honored to be the trusted source and a valuable resource chosen to actively participate in this initiative to end Veteran Homelessness by the end of next year. With this team of dynamic and amazing individuals I know we can do it,” Bettie Meinel, President of the Long Island Board of Realtors®, said.

“CDCLI is pleased to stand with Suffolk County, the Veterans Administration, and fellow non-profit organizations on key initiatives that support our veterans,” said Marianne Garvin, President and CEO of Community Development Corporation of Long Island, Inc. “We are proud to administer the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Program on Long Island on behalf of New York State, and in partnership with the Northport VA. This program currently enables 328 veteran families to have a safe, stable place to live. Working together, we can ensure that our veterans get the services they need and deserve.”

“Long Island Cares wholeheartedly supports the “**Housing Our Homeless Heroes Act.**” We currently directly serve at least 100 Suffolk County veterans each week through our storefront pantries in Hauppauge and Lindenhurst, homeless outreach unit, and mobile pantry programs. It is a privilege to successfully partner with the County’s Veterans Service Agency headed by Tom Ronayne to support their efforts at crucial events such as Veteran Stand Downs and job fairs aimed at preserving and procuring housing for our heroes,” Michael Hayes, Manager of Government Affairs and Veterans Services for Long Island Cares, Inc., said.

“Veterans and their families have given so much in service to our nation. It is our honor to serve them in their time of need as they face challenges related to housing or homelessness,” Sam Lewis, Deputy Program Director for Supportive Service for Veteran Families (SSVF) said.

“Our veterans deserve our support, it should not be thought of as 'charity'. They have made a great sacrifice to preserve our freedom and way of life. Homelessness is unacceptable,” Joe Maddalone, Chairman of the Huntington Chamber of Commerce Veterans Committee, said.